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Agenda item 9
Adoption of the report of the Committee on the work of its forty-first session

Draft report

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Addendum

Programme questions: evaluation

(item 4 (b))

Evaluation of the population programme

1. At its 2nd and 4th meetings, on 11 and 12 June 2001, the Committee considered the note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the in-depth evaluation of the population programme (E/AC.51/2001/3).

2. The Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services introduced the report. Representatives of the Secretary-General responded to the questions raised during the Committee's consideration of the report.

Discussion

3. The view was expressed that the evaluation report provides a good and integrated account of United Nations population activities.

4. The Population Division was commended for the high quality of its reports, particularly its work on population ageing and the recent report on replacement migration, and the success of the population information network, POPIN. The view was also expressed that the reports of the Population Division, such as the report on replacement migration, are weak, and that the timeliness of some of its publications should be improved. The Division should make more use of reliable country data

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and assist countries in strengthening systems for routine data collection, issues too wide a range of reports and should focus more on poverty and emerging policy issues and the data needs of developing countries. The view was expressed that due to financial constraints the regional commissions are not in a position to carry forward their work and their outputs are of variable quality.

5. The use of the Internet for the dissemination of information on population should not affect the use of traditional methods of distribution of documents. The same should apply to the regional commissions concerning the distribution of publications, and this was highlighted in recommendation 3.

6. Concern was expressed over the decrease in resources devoted to the programme, especially in the regional commissions. An inquiry was made on whether ESCWA had been given the necessary resources to post information on the Internet, as highlighted in recommendation 4 (c). The view was also expressed that the evaluation reports should not make recommendations regarding budgetary and financial requirements but rather determine the necessity of a particular activity. The importance of financing the programme from the regular budget and not from extrabudgetary resources was reiterated since the use of the latter could put the programme in financial difficulties and weaken its implementation capability, and this was highlighted in recommendation 10.

Conclusion and recommendation

7. The Committee recommended the approval of the recommendations contained in the in-depth evaluation of the population programme, and that the Population Division improve its work in the following areas:

(a) The use of reliable country data;

(b) Helping countries to strengthen systems of routine data collection;

(c) Inclusion of a poverty focus within some of its analysis;

(d) Inclusion of the important dimension of the environment in its research;

(e) Coordination of efforts in maintaining the two web sites (POPIN and the Division web site) to reduce any duplication;

(f) Dissemination of information through the Internet to ensure that no information is available solely through sales publications.